

Before I conclude my remarks, I would like to thank the Consul General of Egypt in New York, Soheir Zaki, for hosting a reception for His Holiness today.

On behalf of my colleagues, I welcome Pope Shenouda III on his visit to this country, and hope that his stay is a pleasant and fruitful one.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS SETTLEMENT PLAN FOR WESTERN SAHARA

##### HON. LEE H. HAMILTON

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 23, 1998*

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Speaker, I believe the 1997 Houston Accord, negotiated under the leadership of U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan by his Personal Envoy, former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, offers the best hope for achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of the Western Sahara. However, I am concerned that the parties to the plan—the Government of Morocco and the Polisario Front—are not doing enough to meet their commitments under this agreement. A lack of cooperation by the parties is impeding the progress of the U.N. Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). On August 7, 1998 I wrote to President Clinton concerning MINURSO and implementation of the Houston Accords, and on August 31, 1998 I received a reply. The text of the correspondence follows:

COMMITTEE ON INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

*Washington, DC, August 7, 1998.*

The PRESIDENT,  
*The White House,*  
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR PRESIDENT CLINTON: I write to urge you to support actively the full implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan for Western Sahara. I commend the commitment by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to resolving this decades-long conflict as well as the extraordinary leadership and accomplishments of his Personal Envoy, former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, in successfully negotiating the 1997 Houston Accord. I believe this agreement offers the best hope for achieving a just and lasting solution to the question of the Western Sahara.

The parties to the plan—the Government of Morocco and the Polisario Front—are not doing enough to meet their commitments under this agreement. Implementation of the first phase of the Houston Accord is already some six months behind schedule, with further delays likely. I believe the United States has an important interest in the full and timely implementation of both the Houston Accord and the underlying UN Settlement Plan.

I would like to bring to your attention three areas where a lack of cooperation is impeding the progress of the UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

First, the two parties, as well as Algeria and Mauritania, have not concluded a status-of-forces agreement (SOFA) to facilitate the deployment of MINURSO-formed military units—including some U.S. forces. To ensure the orderly, peaceful conduct of the referendum, those forces are set to be increased as the Houston Accord enters its second phase.

I do not see how the United Nations can deploy this force without a clear, prior agreement from all parties on the conditions under which they would operate.

Second, the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) does not yet have an agreement with the Government of Morocco to formalize its presence in the Western Sahara, as is required by the Houston Accord. Without an agreement allowing it to operate freely, the UNHCR has made no progress on organizing the safe and voluntary repatriation of the Western Saharan refugees from camps in Algeria and Mauritania.

Third, the Government of Morocco has imposed restrictions on MINURSO aircraft. I am concerned about attempts to dictate to the United Nations who it may and may not transport on its own planes, and urge you to encourage the Moroccan government to refrain from such interference with MINURSO's work.

I believe U.S. support is critical to the successful implementation of this peace plan. The United States should have its own officials on the ground to report on MINURSO's progress, should press the parties directly to carry out their commitments to the peace plan, and should give strong support to the efforts of former Secretary Baker. I understand that Secretary Baker, acting on behalf of the UN Secretary General, may reconvene the Houston conference that produced this agreement, and I hope you will support his diplomacy in full.

Sincerely,

LEE H. HAMILTON,  
*Ranking Democratic Member.*

THE WHITE HOUSE,  
*Washington, August 31, 1998.*

Hon. LEE H. HAMILTON,  
*House of Representatives,*  
*Washington, DC.*

DEAR LEE: I received your letter concerning the Western Sahara, and I agree with your views on the importance of full implementation of the United Nations settlement plan. I also share your concern over the slow pace of progress.

United States officials at the United Nations and in the region constantly monitor developments affecting the U.N. Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO). As you are aware, the United Nations is working with Morocco, Algeria, and Mauritania to conclude a status of forces agreement (SOFA). We recognize the importance of having a SOFA in place and will continue to urge progress.

Regarding the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), I am encouraged by the recent agreement between Moroccan and UNHCR delegations in Geneva to allow UNHCR to operate freely. UNHCR is awaiting confirmation from the Government of Morocco before proceeding, but anticipates a favorable decision.

We continually discourage Government of Morocco restrictions concerning who may and may not travel on MINURSO aircraft. As the recent presence of congressional staff on MINURSO flights demonstrates, Moroccan restrictions have not affected our ability to support the U.N. process. That said, we continue to urge the Government of Morocco to lift these restrictions, which cause Morocco to be viewed in an unfavorable light by the international community.

The U.S. embassy closely follows the settlement process in the Western Sahara through visits to Western Sahara proper and to refugee camps in Tindouf. We have also placed a U.S. official, on a short-term basis, in Western Sahara to observe and report on developments. The United States will continue to take every opportunity to urge the Government of Morocco and the Polisario to

work with the United Nations in resolving this longstanding dispute.

Again, thank you for sharing your concerns on this important issue. I appreciate the active interest and positive involvement of Congress in supporting the U.N. peace process and the full implementation of the Houston Accords.

Sincerely,

*Bill.*

#### AN "OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY"

##### HON. RON KLINK

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 23, 1998*

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the great township of Cranberry, Pennsylvania for being honored by the Pennsylvania Commerce of Business and Industry as "Outstanding Community" 1998. The award was presented on September 14, 1998, in Hershey, PA.

Founded in 1804, Cranberry has grown into a thriving township that offers a prosperous job market and a high quality of life for its citizens. Since 1990 alone it has gained more than 1,180,000 square feet of new commercial construction. Their economy is a model for the modern economy based in retail trade and the service industry. For these reasons the Pennsylvania Commerce of Business and Industry chose to honor them this year.

This is a great accomplishment for Cranberry Township as they are the first township of this size to receive the award. They provide an example for other small communities in this country on how to succeed and compete economically.

#### CELEBRATING KIDS DAY AMERICA

##### HON. MARGE ROUKEMA

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, September 23, 1998*

Mrs. ROUKEMA. Mr. Speaker, I rise to call attention to the annual Kids Day America, a nationwide event that educates children about the importance of good health. Taking places at thousands of doctors' offices, Kids Day America offers health screening, educational program, fingerprinting and identification photos, among other services. This event is intended to protect the health and safety of our children—our most precious treasures.

In my Congressional District, Kids Day America was held Saturday, September 19, at the Rochelle Family Chiropractic Center in Rochelle Park, headed by Dr. David Hager. The funds raised this year will go to the Conklin Youth Center's Caring and Sharing Project in Hackensack. This important program provides care for abused children who have been removed from their parents' homes.

Free scoliosis screening and dental screening was offered to children who attended Saturday's event. In addition, the Rochelle Park Police Department fingerprinted and photographed children for identification purposes. Police officers also explained the DARE anti-drug program. McGruff the Crime Dog, Joey the Clown and free balloons helped make the event fun and entertaining for children.